Old Meets New: The Antiquities Act, Resource Management, and the Urbanizing West

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Paper to be presented in Centennial Reflections and Challenges: The Antiquities Act of 1906 and its Legacy, Society for American Archaeology, April 27, 2006, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Introduction

Today, the Bureau of Land Management seems a newcomer to the administration and management of national monuments: Only a handful of the national monuments are administered by the Bureau, and all of these were established since 1996. But the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Bureau of Land Management share a venerable history that goes well beyond managing monuments. The BLM operates under a multiple-use, sustained-yield mandate with two main objectives. The second objective—meeting the Nation's need for domestic sources of energy, minerals, food, timber, and fiber—is the better known. But the first objective of the Bureau's management mandate—in parallel with the Antiquities Act—is resource protection.

In the years leading up to the Antiquities Act, the old General Land Office—BLM's predecessor—was charged with disposing federal holdings . Few options existed then to protect archaeological resources. Land Commissioners Binger Hermann and William Afton Richards, both advocates of archaeological and natural site preservation, used "temporary withdrawals" to protect lands that would later become national parks or monuments, including Crater Lake, Bandelier, and Petrified Forest. To protect these permanently, the commissioners supported legislative proposals for creating national parks and monuments.

In drawing attention to the values of archaeological sites in the "temporary withdrawals," and by pushing for a means to make the withdrawals permanent, BLM's Land Commissioner forefathers played a key role in the 1906 Antiquities Act. Here we describe how the Bureau uses the Antiquities Act and its underlying premises to achieve its resource management objectives.

The Changing West

In the last century, the relationship between public lands and the public has changed dramatically. The Antiquities Act was drafted in response to unrestricted excavation, looting, and the commodification of archaeological resources in what was then our nation's remote backcountry. Today, the public lands have become our nation's backyard, and increasingly, our nation's front yard. Communities look to the public lands to increase their own land bases; outdoor enthusiasts seek recreation opportunities; commercial industries extract profits; and conservationists value the public lands for the open space and ecosystem protections they offer.

The Bureau of Land Management manages some 261 million acres of surface estate, nearly one-eighth of the landmass of the United States. The Bureau is governed by the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976, or FLPMA. Although present economic values play a role in management decisions, FLPMA directs the Bureau to consider other values, including our ability to hand on the public lands unimpaired and in healthy condition to future generations.

The biggest challenge that the Bureau faces, and one which echoes the challenges that gave rise to the Antiquities Act, is the changing face of the West. In the last decades of the 19th century, the West was experiencing a population and popularity boom brought about by the American conquest of Spain's colonies, minerals strikes, the developing railroad system and the rise of adventure tourism. Much of the West's modest population was concentrated in the areas of Spanish colonial occupation and the Pacific trade. In the Southwest, rapid growth along railroad corridors and in "feeder communities" that

produced mineral wealth, timber, and range products brought the region's ruins to the nation's attention. A heritage tourism industry led by rancher "outfitters," unregulated collecting and excavating, and conflicts over control of archaeological resources led to the adoption of the Antiquities Act.

Today's West is experiencing another population boom. Arizona and Nevada lead the nation in growth rates, in new housing starts, and the development of new suburbs. Over most of the West, population is increasing faster than the national average, and people are pushing out into the old open spaces of the Grazing Service and the General Land Office. Many of the West's growth centers lies within 10 miles of public lands; most lie within 25 miles.

For the Bureau, this has meant new management challenges. Land exchanges and sales, to enable the metroplexes and the smaller communities of the New West to continue to grow, are a regular feature of the Bureau's daily work. While these create a growing management and planning burden, they are a relatively predictable outcome of the West's rising population.

Harder to predict has been the public's demand for recreation opportunities. Over 56 million people visited public lands last year; visitation has grown by 65% in the past twenty years. Fishing, hunting, camping, and target shooting, once the mainstays of recreation on the public lands, have been joined by kayaking, rafting, rock-climbing, bouldering, orienteering, and geocaching. Hikers and horse-back riders now share the backcountry with mountain-bikes, jeeps and SUVs, snowmobiles, and, most recently, three- and four-wheeled all-terrain-vehicles. "Events" are also much in vogue. The public lands are now venues for rock-hopping and crawling, speed tests, ultra-marathons and

endurance running, off-highway bike and four-wheel-drive challenges, and ever-evolving types of backcountry and public lands entertainments.

Heritage tourism seems tame in comparison to these. It brings people out to see archaeological sites and historic districts, to visit museums holding collections from the public lands and to go to visitor centers with heritage-oriented themes.

Energy production dominates the news, but historical uses of the public lands have also changed. Livestock grazing proceeds have plummeted nearly 30 percent in the past ten years, while timber proceeds have declined even more precipitously. At the same time, recreation proceeds have risen to equal these old standbys. We can be sure that the future will see more, and more varied, recreation on public lands. We believe that we will also see an increasing regard for the public lands as bastions of open space and freedom in a West that is experiencing exponential growth.

Legal Protections, Preservation, and Permitting Authorities

Just six and a half percent of BLM lands have been inventoried. If the 279,000 archaeological and historic sites recorded to date are a good guide to the rest, there could be as many as 4 million sites on the public lands. This constitutes the Federal government's largest, most varied and most scientifically important body of heritage resources. The Antiquities Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act underlie BLM's management practices. Their application is outlined in a series of administrative and procedural manuals which incorporate regulatory and policy direction for how BLM administers many aspects of the

cultural resources program, including permitting, planning, interpretation, and Native American consultation.

Land Use Planning, Management, and Monuments

September 18, 1996 represents a landmark in BLM's history: On this day, President Clinton designated 1.7 million acres of public lands in southern Utah as the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and decreed that "…The Secretary of the Interior shall manage the monument through the Bureau of Land Management." BLM had never managed a National Monument before.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt was the architect of BLM's new role. His vision was simple, and large: "This isn't about a ruin here or there…it's about a whole interwoven landscape. It's about communities that were living in and on this land and relating to each other and moving across this landscape and drawing their living and their inspiration and their spirituality from a landscape. Doesn't it make sense in light of a subsequent 100 years of understanding to say that we have room in the West to protect…an anthropological ecosystem?"

Four months after that speech, and four years after Grand Staircase/Escalante, Clinton designated Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in southwestern Colorado and assigned the BLM as monument manager again. BLM should manage these new monuments, said Babbitt "…because the largest land manager ought to be induced to have a sense of pride rather than simply a bunch of inventory out in the garage that is discovered and given to someone else." BLM's monuments didn't need to be national

parks, the Secretary reasoned. "The visitation sites are already there. What you need to do is manage the ecosystem and make sure there are no incompatible uses."

Today, BLM manages 15 National Monuments as part of its National Landscape Conservation System. These monuments join other designated areas, including Wilderness Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic Areas, National Historic Trails, National Scenic Trails, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, or ACECs, as areas managed to preserve and protect unique suites of resources.

A Management Strategy for The Next Century: From Commodity to Amenity

Regulating access and promoting professionalism—two excellent outcomes of the Antiquities Act—has served us well over the past century, and it remains a mainstay of BLM's preservation efforts.

Our strategy for the next century hinges on broadening our views, and the public's views, on two key points. First, the value of archaeological resources. We are moving from a sense of archaeological resources as a sort of commodity—that is, goods with a commercial value, to seeing them as an amenity—something that adds intrinsic value to our experience of the public lands. We are also shifting our views on how we present archaeological resources. We have been focussed on charismatic sites—"world-class resources"—as important in their own isolated realm. We are moving towards a view that places archaeological resources within landscapes, environments, and ecosystems. Our challenge is to conserve a fragile, largely undocumented, but vitally important archaeological record—the 4 million-plus sites that we estimate exist on the public lands.

As the Western states continue to urbanize and recreational users seek open spaces and frontier freedoms, our challenge will grow.

Citizen stewardship is the thematic foundation of the BLM's Antiquities Act Centennial celebration, and it is a message and focus that we intend to sustain long after the Centennial year is past. We are treating every visitor to the public lands as a citizen steward. We would like all visitors to bear responsibility for visiting heritage sites respectfully and in non-impacting ways, and we are providing information on how to carry out those responsibilities. For those with additional interest, we offer opportunities for them to appreciate and conserve the past. Citizen stewardship—recruiting and involving each and every visitor—is the only viable strategy that will preserve the vast and varied heritage resources on public lands into the future.

BLM drafts, educates, and empowers its "self-regulating"citizen stewards through its "Adventures in the Past" program. Developed in the early 1990s, as a direct response to the 1988 amendments to the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, "Adventures" brings together myriad outreach, interpretation, and education initiatives. BLM has developed a variety of public programs and initiatives in this centennial year, including a website, a "Leave No Trace" hiking ethics tag that stresses stewardship of heritage resources, tabletop displays, logos, DVDs, and additional funding for projects ranging from site stabilization to museum displays.

The BLM cannot extend even the limited protections afforded by monument designation to all of the public lands. But the public, acting as "citizen stewards," can. As the populations of the West continue to grow, more people will find their way to the public lands; more demands will be made for special management practices. Our goal is

to have every public lands visitor implement "self-regulating," personally-motivated special management practices that will ensure the preservation, protection, and enjoyment of our public lands legacy for future generations. We were once challenged as a nation to see ourselves, civil servant and private citizen alike, as trustees and stewards of the nation's heritage. We believe this challenge holds the key to continuing the work of the Antiquities Act into the future.